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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NDJAMENA 000114

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/C AND AF/USSES
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/02/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [AL](#)
SUBJECT: ROSY SCENARIO?: INSIDER AND OUTSIDER JUDGE CHAD
REBELS NOT READY FOR MAJOR ATTACKS

REF: NDJAMENA 102

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Classified By: DCM SUE BREMNER FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

SUMMARY

11. (C) Two authoritative sources, one a veteran Chadian political figure and Deby counselor, the other the chief intelligence officer for the French military forces here, offered concordant views on the unlikelihood of a major attack by Chad rebels in the near future. National Mediator Abderahman Moussa told Ambassador and DCM March 31 that the Chadian rebels had become demoralized and in many cases ready for reconciliation with Chad, but were still under the tight control of ("held hostage by") the Bashir regime in Sudan. Moussa said some rebel leaders, including Soubiane, were interested in negotiating with the GOC, but were being prevented by Khartoum from doing so. Our French contact emphasized that the Chadian rebels were in no position to make a major attack on Chad now; that if they did move across the border, it would likely not be a major offensive and likely would have more "political" goals than "military" ones. In his view, the Chad national and military leaderships were confident of the ability of their armed forces to defeat the rebels in eastern Chad.

12. (C) The National Mediator is the "insider's insider" here: a veteran of the Chadian wars -- both political and military ones -- he has been active as minister, diplomat (twice Ambassador to Sudan!) and now troubleshooter and deal-maker, as well as close advisor on key issues to President Deby. His portrait of the Chad rebels and analysis of the probability of a major attack differed from Foreign Minister Faki's darker message last week (reftel); it tracks with what we are hearing not only from the French but from others more generally at this stage. Moussa seemed to imply that Chad's appeals to Arab League members to convince Khartoum to desist from launching the Chad rebels against Chad might be having some effect. END SUMMARY.

FRENCH INTEL CHIEF

13. (C) LTC Michel Cassagne, chief intelligence officer of France's Forces in Chad, told Ambassador March 30 that in his analysis, the Chad rebels were in no position to make a major attack on Chad now. There had been a recent increase in activity among Chad rebels in Sudan, including re-supply and re-equipping, but this in itself did not indicate that the rebels were preparing for a major offensive. It was not clear how much fuel, supplies, or ammunition the rebels were getting. The rebels had not been in action for nearly a year, so their leaders needed to give them something to do to keep them organized and focused. If the rebels did move across the border, it would likely not be a major offensive and likely would have more "political" goals than "military" ones, such as keeping troops motivated, reminding everyone of their continued existence, and demonstrating that they were still capable of inflicting damage. The Chadian armed forces were confident of their ability to defeat rebels. The Chadian armed forces were far better armed and prepared than last year.

14. (C) Cassagne pointed out that President Deby had toured the frontier in January, and that at each public appearance he had been surrounded by evidence of his military might: both on the ground and in the air, new fixed- and rotary-wing air assets had greeted him. Deby was giving the rebels every

opportunity to see that the Chadian armed forces were asymmetrically superior to them, advised Cassagne. Deby,s decision to allow 60 senior generals to retire last month, and his continued extended political tours of Chad's various regions, indicated the high level of his own confidence in his military's ability to defeat rebels in eastern Chad. The Chad rebels had the ability to cause trouble in eastern Chad if they chose to attack, Cassagne conceded, but there was no longer much if any chance they could attack Ndjamena as in

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2006 and 2008, because of limited operational autonomy. The balance had definitely changed since last year.

GOC NATIONAL MEDIATOR

15. (SBU) National Mediator Abderahman Moussa told Ambassador and DCM March 31 that the Chadian rebels were presently very demoralized. He claimed that many fighters were ready to return to Chad, and some leaders were interested in negotiation with the GoC, but Sudan still wanted to make trouble and so was not permitting the rebels freedom of movement (&was holding them hostage.8) Of the rebel chiefs, Soubiane in particular wanted to talk to Ndjamena, but was reluctant to abandon his troops to possible Sudanese punishment. The GoC was working with Tripoli to invite Soubiane there for dialogue in a neutral location. Daussa Deby, a Chadian-born Libyan, had recently presented his credentials as Tripoli's ambassador to Chad and might be helpful in facilitating talks. Generally speaking, the rebels knew that the GoC was stronger this year than last. Perhaps the rebels were heeding President Deby,s threat to engage in hot pursuit into Sudan if necessary. Whether they intended to try to mount an offensive remained to be seen, but they were not likely to be successful. Nor was Chad interested in having to fight, as it did not want to be accused of attacking Sudan. &Chad aspires to be a multiparty democracy,8 said Moussa, adding that some rebels might return home and take up positions as opposition figures.

CHAD AND THE ARABS

16. (SBU) The roots of Chad-Sudan enmity were tribal, Moussa said. He counted 27 different tribes that existed on both the Chadian and Sudanese border. The GoS was upset that tribes on the Sudanese side preferred the JEM to the GoS, Moussa offered. The GoC,s long-term goals included coordinating with Sudan to build schools, hospitals, roads, etc., in the border region, which was extremely resource-poor. President Deby himself had in the past been seen by some border tribesmen as too supportive of Sudanese President Bashir. Both Bashir and Darfur regional tribal sultans wanted to cultivate relations with the Saudis, who had been confused by Bashir,s attempts to paint the Darfur conflict as a disputebetween Arabs and Africans. The Arab League wassupportive of Bashir in his current difficultieswith the ICC, but the Chadians had asked key Leaguemembers to try to convince Bashir that he shouldnot maintain a hostile stance toward Chad. Mousa revealed that he and FM Faki had made the rounds of Arab capitals last year, to explain and defend Chad's case vis-a-vis Sudan. The Saudis, Egyptians, Qataris and Libyans were all &sitting on the fence,8 continued Moussa. &They don,t want trouble between Chad and Sudan, and they don,t want the government of Sudan to fall,8 as this would increase regional instability.

COMMENT

17. (C) Moussa is the "insider's insider" here: a veteran of the Chadian wars -- both political and military ones -- he has been active as minister, diplomat (twice Ambassador to Sudan!) and now troubleshooter and deal-maker, as well as close advisor on key issues to President Deby. Moussa's portrait of the Chad rebels and his analysis of the probability of a major attack differed from Foreign Minister Faki's darker description last week (reftel); it tracks with what we are hearing not only from the French but more generally at this stage. Moussa seemed to imply that Chad's appeals to Arab League members to convince Khartoum to desist from launching the Chad rebels against Chad might be having some effect.

NIGRO